

10SHORT

The issue of private applicator licenses for pesticides is beginning to pay off at the ranch. The cows we are treating for hammerhead lice and four-season saber ticks show less infestation of the lice and more unrest in the ticks after the second spraying now that this is a fully certified operation.

Effects are far-reaching, like any school. Last summer I watched a graduate roll mothballs under the saddle house to remove a mother skunk and her brood without upsetting her. He was putting perfect English on the balls to send them way up underneath the floor. But best of all, the skunks left in 24 hours and moths stopped eating on our saddle blankets for a whole month.

Other phases of the modern operation need to come under licensing schools. Vaccines today are sold in multi-strains of diseases unknown to the shortgrass country. Blackleg vaccine, for example, come out a seven-way shot of some dreadful sounding diseases including what I translated is a collapsed craw disease found only in ostriches 30 miles inland off the Cape of Good Hope.

Range scientists will be relieved, I feel sure, upon the passing of the kerosene and wood ashes generations of ranch doctors like myself. I flinch every time I look at the trash barrel full of medicine bottles by the cow chute and recall the day's of immunizing cattle for a couple of diseases and vaccinating sheep for soremouth once in their lifetime.

However, the other day a financial journal reported that the vaunted Canadian health service at Toronto was imploring citizens to drink chicken soup for bad colds and stop overloading the doctors' offices with their snorting and coughing fits, not to mention the way they were messing up the waiting rooms wadding up Kleenexes and scattering magazines all over the place.

Reading and care of rain gauges is also a field that needs to be regulated by the State. For instance, it was months after freeze danger last summer before we turned the tubes over on our stations. The late frost in April threw us off stride. Too, so little moisture fell in the spring and summer that we kept recording no-tenths of an inch in every pasture, until it became such a cloudbust over the north side, a gauge on a cedar post sucked up an inch of rain and held it in suspension.

We'd never have noticed the difference except that when the old boy reading the gauges tried to drain the tube, he discovered it was upside down. Rains had fallen before big enough to cause five foot and one-inch deep run-off, but not over there on that flat plateau.

We theorized that the post had dried out so much from the drouth that once rain fell, the action of the dehydrated wood sucking the moisture from the air and the ground steamed up an inch of condensation in the top of the glass tube.

Furthermore, a good rain gauge licensing-school would be important to establish a code of ethics for gaugers. Rain reporters have always run heavier toward "bulls" than "bears". About every facet of the ranch business ends up falling in a short position, regardless of how the rancher times his marketing, so alone out in a damp pasture without witnesses, a herder can tack a few extra tenths on, and if he is too far out of line, make his adjustments on the way to town.

I confess I was skeptical of the private applicator law, but we are seeing better results dispersing horse flies and better luck cranking sprayer motors on cold mornings with four licensed men on duty.

We may have to have the electric coops step in and read the rain gauges to ever have accurate information. However, no more rain than the shortgrass country receives, it won't be a bid undertaking ...